

IRISH STUDIES

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SPECIAL ISSUE

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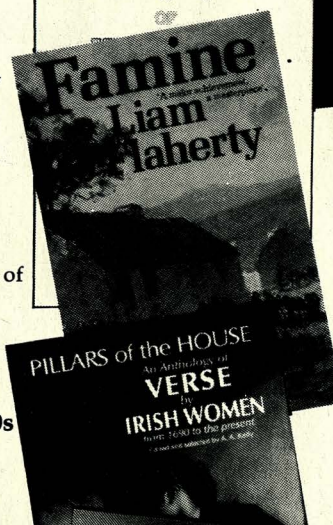
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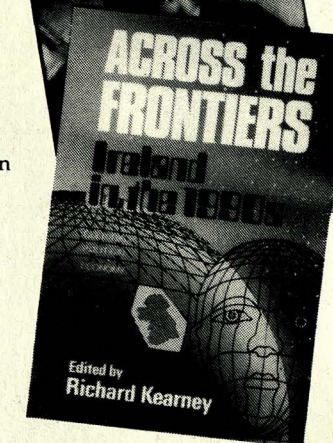
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EDITORIAL

HATS OFF TO THE AIB AND THE BAIS!

The news that the Allied Irish Bank has awarded £150,000 to the British Association for Irish Studies is a great boost for Irish Studies in Britain. The AIB are to be congratulated on recognising the cultural and educational needs of the large Irish community in Britain. Everyone who is concerned with the development of Irish studies will hope that this funding is only the beginning and that other large Irish corporations will follow the AIB's splendid initiative.

.....

This issue of ISIB is dedicated to the memory of two fine Irishmen, Donall MacAmhlaigh and Desmond Greaves both of whom have sadly passed away recently. Both men will be much missed. As a special tribute to Donall, we are pleased to feature a previously unpublished article by him, "Documenting the Fifties".

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NEWS

Irish Studies Centre, Polytechnic of North London

The Irish in Britain Research Forum continues with an interesting set of speakers.

Thursday 18 May 5-7 pm "Images of Irish Women: A Second Generation Appraisal"

Moy McCrory, author of 'The Water's Edge', will appraise Images of Irish Women in literature from the perspective of someone who grew up as second generation Irish in Britain.

Thursday June 22 5-7 pm

Venue for all meetings: The Conference Room, Kentish Town Site, The Polytechnic of North London, Prince of Wales Road, London NW5. (Nearest tube: Kentish Town).

For further details of the Research Forum or other activities of the Irish Studies Centre, contact: Mary Hickman, Irish Studies Centre, PNL, Prince of Wales Road, London, NW5. Tel: 01 607 2789 Ext. 4092.

Inner London Educational Authority

At long, long last the Irish studies teaching pack 'Britain and Ireland', written by Emma Thornton many years ago is ready for publication. Contact the Learning Resources Centre at ILEA for further information.

Hibernia Books

An excellent new catalogue of second hand books, mainly devoted to modern Irish Literature has been produced. The catalogue can be obtained from John Dunne, Hibernia Books, 2 Goodison Close, Fair Oak, Hants. SO5 7LE. Please enclose a S.A.E.

Irish Post Awards

Congratulations to Siobhan O'Neill, the cornerstone of Irish language teaching in London on receiving one of the prestigious annual Irish Post community awards.

British Association for Irish Studies

The BAIS is collecting information on what Irish studies classes are available. If you are running a class, contact Sean Hutton at 9 Poland Street, London W1. Tel: 01 439 3043.

Irish Language in Liverpool

On the subject of Irish classes, Brian Stowell writes in to mention the fact that there is an Irish language class running at Breckfield Community School, Hamilton Road, Liverpool. L54 4PX. The class is on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 9 and runs from September to Easter. Brian can be contacted on 051 645 8675.

British Association for Irish Studies

BIENNIAL CONFERENCE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL, 8-10 SEPTEMBER 1989

The biennial conference of the British Association for Irish Studies will be held at the University of Liverpool, 8-10 September 1989.

The main theme will be 'Understanding Ireland'. It will try to address some of the intellectual, conceptual and other problems involved in studying Ireland in Britain exploring aspects of the content of Irish Studies syllabuses, and identifying potentially fruitful areas of research.

Individual sessions will explore perceptions of Ireland and Britain; possible conceptual frameworks for the study of history and literature; the reporting of political violence; the role of the Irish language in the teaching of Irish Studies; and reports on research in progress on the Irish in Britain, with special reference to religion and crime in the past and to the educational experience of Irish children and to the position of Irish women today.

Speakers include:

Dr. George Boyce, University College, Swansea
Dr. Brendan Bradshaw, Queen's College, Cambridge
Dr. David Cairns, North Staffordshire Polytechnic
Dr. Sheridan Gilley, University of Durham
Ms Mary J. Hickman, The Polytechnic of North London
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Professor James O'Connell, University of Bradford
Dr. Maggie Pearson, University of Liverpool
Dr. Shaun Richards, North Staffordshire Polytechnic
Dr. Roger Swift, University of Liverpool

**A fuller programme and booking form is available from the local conference secretary:
Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool, P.O. Box 147, Liverpool L69 3BX.
Tel: 051 794 3831.**

Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1926-1989



An Appreciation of the man and his writings by Séan Hutton

When Peter Mulligan rang me one Sunday morning in January to tell me that Dónall Mac Amhlaigh had died, I was deeply shocked. The death was so unexpected. Also, I had been planning to visit Northampton in January, and had hoped to meet Dónall, but had, at the last moment, postponed my visit. So, to my sadness at the death of someone I admired greatly was added a poignant regret at having missed that final opportunity of meeting Dónall. I had, in fact, looked forward to many meetings with him. My move from a remote town in Humberside to London seemed to carry that promise. For, although I had corresponded with him, spoken with him on the telephone, and even met him briefly, I did not really know him well. But future meetings were not to be.

Dónall had cycled to Northampton station to catch the train to London, where he was to lecture on the evening of 27 January. Feeling unwell, he walked to the doctor's surgery, where he collapsed and died of a massive heart attack. The tributes published in the press, following his death, made clear to me the pleasure I had missed in not knowing him better. It was not only the prizewinning writer who was mourned. It was also the thoroughly decent, sensitive and principled person that he was. In the words of Alan Titley: "Má thánig an scribhneoir agus an duine uasal le chéile in aon phearsa amháin riamh ba é Dónall Mac Amhlaigh an duine sin." (If authorship and nobility of character were ever joined together in one person, that person was Dónall Mac Amhlaigh.)

Dónall was born outside Galway city in 1926. His father was a professional soldier who reached the rank of quartermaster sergeant in the Irish army. His mother came from an Irish-speaking family and, although Dónall spent much of his youth in Kilkenny, in the *galldacht* (English speaking part of Ireland), County Galway had a special place in his affections. He began work at the age of fifteen in a woollen mill, and subsequently worked on a farm and as a waiter in a hotel in Salthill, on the edge of Galway city, before joining *An Chéad Cath* (the First — Irish speaking — Battalion of the Irish army) in 1947.

Failing to find employment in Ireland when he left the army, he was forced, like so many others in that grim decade of the 1950s, to emigrate. In 1951 he came to England, where he spent most of the rest of his life as a building worker. Had it been possible, he would have lived off the proceeds of his writing. He was aware that some regarded it as a gimmick that an established writer and journalist should continue to work on the building sites — but it was necessity, and his own integrity, which kept him there.

Had he been a harder character, with an eye to the main chance, Dónall might have made more, in the worldly sense, of his talents. But he was a person of great modesty and sensitivity, with very deep loyalties, and both as a man and as an artist there was a point beyond which he would not go in the exploitation of fellow human beings. When, for example, Dónall was writing his book *Schnitzer ó Sé* he created pseudonyms to refer to recognisable personalities who were being satirised in the book. He thought of quite a suitable one for his fellow writer Pádraig Ua Maeleoin — but abandoned it because it contained a play on Pádraig's baldness.

Dónall was a keen reader as a child. When he was in the army he began to keep a diary, and his diaries provided material for a number of his books. Irish language magazines and papers offered him the opportunity to write for a public. His first efforts were published in the Gaeltacht paper *Amárach*, and it was the interest of the editor of *Feasta* and of the publishing house Clóchomhar which led him to more substantial efforts and to the production of his best known book.

That book, which was published in 1960, was *Dialann Deorai* (An Exile's Diary — translated by V. Iremonger as *An Irish Navvy* Routledge 1964). *Saol Saighdiúra* (A Soldier's Life), an account of his three years in the Irish army, was published in 1962; and *Diarmaid ó Donaill* — an autobiographical novel which deals with the youth of its subject — appeared in 1965. In all, Dónall published nine books in Irish — including the playful satire *Schnitzer ó Sé*,

which had subsequently been published in his own English translation – as well as a mass of journalism in Irish and English. His last published novel, *Deoraithe* (Exiles), was on that theme which he had made his own – the experience of the Irish rural working class in England.

Dónall's writing was strongly based on his own experience and on what he observed around him. Niall Ó Conaill, the central character of *Deoraithe* says – using words which Dónall might as easily have applied to himself – “Dhéanfadh sé gléas taifeadta de féin le grá don Ghaeilge agus don chine breá gnaiúil seo a thug leo i ón seansaol slán.” (He would transform himself into a recording machine out of love for the Irish language and this fine, decent people who carried it safely with them from the olden times.) His interest, in his autobiographical and semi-autobiographical writing, lay in recreating atmosphere, in transmitting the experience. Though he had the kindest of natures, he was far from sentimental in his best writing. In a short story like “Thuas ag Clog Dillon” (Up by Dillon's Clock) we find a realism which approaches O'Flaherty's, while in the fine “Buailim le cainteoir dúchais” (I meet a native speaker, i.e. one who spoke Irish as their first language – in which tragedy and irony intermingle – the platitudes of the native speaker are central to the story. His handling of the sexual awakening of the subject of *Diarmaid ó Dónaill* is both sensitive and accurate, and is, even now, refreshing in the directness with which it is treated.

Dónall referred modestly to “my little books” and showed little interest in issues of style or form. He was traditional, rather than experimental, in his approach. I am told that he was not a great reviser. Nevertheless, his writing demonstrates a genuine command of narrative structure, due partly, no doubt, to his own reading and to his background in a strong oral culture. Conversation is handled with enviable accomplishment. The two short stories referred to above illustrate strengths and weaknesses of his work. The opening of “Thuas ag Clog Dillon” sets the picture with all the economy of Hemingway at his best, but then the story tends to drag on in a way that is probably true to life, but not to art. “Buailim le cainteoir dúchais” is a gem, carrying just the right amount of detail for its purpose.

Anyone who was privileged to hear Dónall speak on the subject of his particular generation's experience of emigration will be aware of the depth of his understanding of the experience, and of its contradictions. He never allowed an empty chauvinism to circumscribe his thinking. He combined kindness and sensitivity with a high degree of moral courage and he was, as the saying goes, “his own man”. He expressed publicly his criticisms of aspects of British government policy towards Ireland and the Irish – such as internment, the PTA and suspect convictions in British courts. Believing that Irish grievances should be brought to the attention of the British public, he was critical of those who argued that the Irish should maintain a low profile in Britain. A socialist and a strong supporter of the Connolly Association, he contributed regularly to the *Irish Democrat*. As a commentator upon public issues, his was an acute, principled, undogmatic voice in a totally human register: as such he will be sadly missed.

My direct contact with Dónall came through History Workshop, when as a member of the organising collective I invited him to speak at Workshops 19 and 20. With that generosity of spirit which led him to support so many worthy and unprofitable causes, he agreed without hesitation. He made a fascinating contribution to History Workshop 19 on the Irish emigrants of the 1950s. The illness of his wife prevented him from speaking at History Workshop 20, but he subsequently sent us, for publication, the thoughtful paper which is printed elsewhere in this issue.

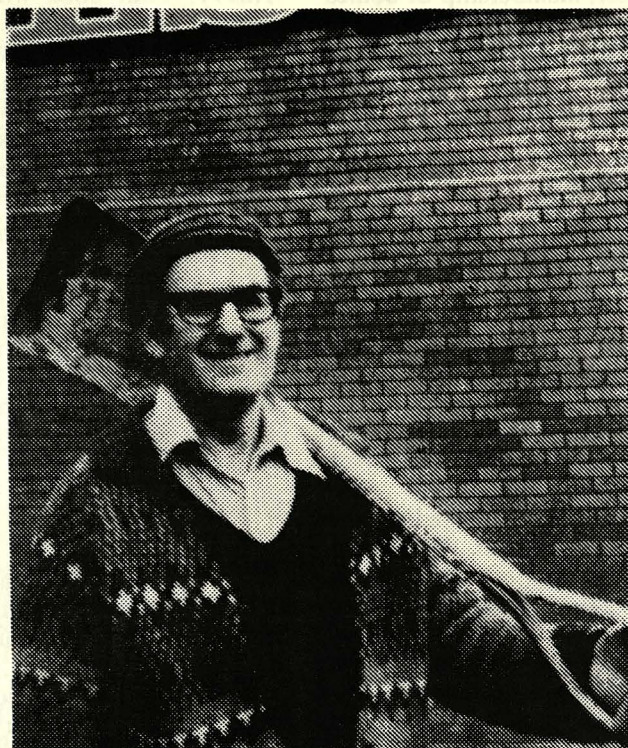
When he was buried at Northampton, representatives of the Irish state and the Gaelic literary world stood alongside his family, his comrades from the Connolly Association, and the men who worked with him on the building sites. On the jacket of his first book, published in 1960, is written: Tá rún daingean aige filleadh ar an bhfearamann dúchais, an dá luaith agus a bhéas oibir oiriúnach le fáil ann.” (He fully intends to return to his native place as soon as ever there is suitable work to be found there.) On 3 February 1989 Dónall Mac Amhlaigh was buried in Kingsthorpe cemetery in Northampton, across the road from the hospital where he began work in 1951, as noisy lorries pounded on the road outside.

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DOCUMENTING THE FIFTIES

Dónall Mac Amhlaigh

When we consider that an estimated million plus Irish people came to Britain to make a living since the founding the Irish Free State in the early 1920's it is surprising to say the least that the experience of this emigration has not found more expression in literature. Patrick Mac Gill, the Donegal-born navvy-poet, had achieved wide recognition before then with such works as *The Rat Pit* and *Children of the Dead End* but though there was continuing emigration from Ireland to Britain right through the long depression of the inter-war years and a huge increase in emigration from 1939 onwards very little emerged in print to reflect the experience. Leaving Mac Gill aside it is not very easy to recall offhand more than a dozen or so books that could be said to deal with the Irish emigrant condition in Britain. A Kerryman, member of the *Gárda Síochána* before he left Ireland, wrote *In a Strange Land* which was published by

Batsford with a glowing foreword by Seán ó Faolain; the late Richard Power wrote a factual account of living in Birmingham in the early 1950's, *Úll i mBarr G5eagáin* which was later published in English and he also wrote a highly-acclaimed novel, *The Hungry Grass* which dealt in passing with the same milieu. There was a very successful play which still runs, *Whistling in the Dark* by John Murphy and John B. Kean's *Self-Portrait* dealt in part with life in the Irish community in Northampton in 1953; John Broderick gave us *London Irish* and more recently J.M. O'Neill's two stunning novels *Open Cut* and *Duffy is Dead* and writers like Neil Jordan and John McGahern set some of their short stories in Irish-in-Britain working class scenes. Desmond Hogan has written about the Irish in Britain too but his characters can hardly be said to belong to the community I have in mind, that is to say the ordinary working class men and women of largely rural background who have a consciousness of belonging to the Irish expatriate community in Britain, who — for example — maintain such links as they can with home by means of Irish newspapers, national or provincial, Irish radio, the

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wanted only to convey what it was like to find oneself in a large city like London after leaving the quiet peacefulness of Connemara or some other Gaeltacht. My own contribution to the literature of the Irish emigrant in Britain in the period was written and published originally in Irish under the title of *Dialann Deoraí* (An Exile's Diary) which Routledge & Kegan Paul later brought out in English with perhaps the more apt if less alliterative title of *An Irish*

The above list is of course sketchy in the extreme but even if it were to include everything about the Irish in Britain over the past fifty years it would be seen that by comparison with the people at home in Ireland we have not been very industrious in the field of literary expression. An odd fact is that a disproportionate amount of the writing that did come from the Irish in Britain in the post World War Two boom years was in the Irish language — much of it in the form of short articles for Irish language periodicals like the now-defunct *Ar Aghaidh* (Forward) and *Amárach* (Tomorrow), two sadly unpropagative titles, it may be thought! These pieces were invariably by people who had no pretensions to being writers and who in most cases

Navy. That book which reproaches me now with the adolescent naivety that pursued me well into adult life, and some others I have since written, are all set in and draw what inspiration they have from the condition of the ordinary Irish mainly rural working class people among whom I have lived and worked since coming to Britain in the Spring of 1951; and so it may be thought a little surprising that my first book, *An Irish Navy*, came about almost by accident.

I began keeping a diary in 1948 for no other reason than that I had been given a small diary for a Christmas gift. I don't think I seriously intended making entries in the diary on a regular basis for any length of time but I did so and in no time at all it became a compulsion with me. My first diary and every one I filled since was written in Irish — not from any great commitment to the Language though there was that too, to be sure, but simply because it did not occur to me to fill it in in English. I was a serving soldier in the Irish-speaking battalion in Renmore Barracks, Galway, then and Irish was the language I heard round me every day; any of my army comrades who came on my diary and wished to read it could have done so with equal facility in either language and so it was no great urge towards privacy that caused me to use the Gaelic. But the habit persisted, as I say, and after I came to Britain much of what I heard, saw and noted of Irish (and English) attitudes found its way, often cryptically, into my little books. By then the use of Irish guaranteed me privacy of expression, more the pity!

Through the early and mid 1950's I wasn't much bothered by the itch to write; as a rule the hours I worked were too long and the energy expended too great to do much more than fill in my diary though the appearance of the Gaeltacht paper *Amárach* spurred me to pen a couple

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of sketches about life in the Irish community here in the English midlands. It was in 1958 when I was married and free of the atmosphere of crowded lodgings that I wrote a piece based on old diary entries and offered it to the Irish language monthly review *Feasta* (*Future* — another expression of Gaelic Revivalist optimism!) The article was accepted much to my delight and I had a letter practically by return post wanting to know if I had much more of this material — enough to make a book, perhaps? I had indeed and with the encouragement of the publishers *An Clóchomhar* in Dublin I set about writing *Dialann Deorai*. This took all of three months — working a couple of hours at night after a long day on the construction of the M.1 — and I will always regard it as a great lost opportunity. I could have made a most memorable book of *Dialann Deorai* or *An Irish Nanny* I believe if I had any idea at all of what I was doing. I had everything, as they say nowadays, going for me: no one else with the exception of the man who wrote *In a Strange Land* had written a book about the Irish labouring class in Britain since Pat Mac Gill was writing back in the 1920's; I had a clear field, knew my subject through and through but I lacked the gumption and the experience to make the most of my advantage. Careful writing and revision I knew nothing about then and so I pounded out the stuff of my first book with never a backward glance, night after night; no correction, no re-reading, no revision and certainly no attempt whatever to give the overall product some shape and form. I suppose there are some 60-70,000 words in *An Irish Nanny* but the manuscript I sent the publishers contained easily double that and it was only their editing (not to speak of the huge labour or correcting my atrocious spelling and grammar!) that made the book as readable as it was. Later the poet Valentin Iremonger rendered me another great service by his self-effacing translation to English.



There must always be a gap between aim and achievement I realise and the most gifted of writers feel they could have done better; my own feeling is that I could hardly have done worse given the advantage of having a clear field to myself and a rich, virtually unworked subject to make the most of. If I had known enough to take a step back the better to see what I was about, if I had exploited many of the scenes and events in the book more fully and if I had examined my own attitudes and those of the people I wrote about more fully I might have had something to be proud of today. If I may make any claim for my first book it is that by and large it reflects the muddled thinking and the ambivalence towards the 'host country' which so many of my acquaintances and contemporaries shared with me. One entry — made on my twenty sixth birthday — shows more clearly than anything the immaturity which runs through *An Irish Nanny*. In that entry I say that it might be nice to be married and have a home of my own (I was then living in a works camp in Berkshire, it was in 1952) but that I was a mite young to be thinking of that yet! If I felt I was too young at twenty-six for the responsibilities of the married state then no doubt I was, but such immaturity didn't make

for very perceptive writing and in fact I was to hang on my bachelor status for another five or six years.....



Such awareness as I now have came far too late to benefit me as a writer or would-be writer when I started out and later, using the medium of fiction in a long novel called *Deoraithe* (*Exiles*) it may well be that I went to the other extreme: over-compensated as it were, laboured the point that I barely made in my first book. I had not yet learned to convey things obliquely, I think, and it is perhaps significant — if not very comforting — that more than one reviewer of the last novel valued it more for its social documentary content than for its literary merit. But even that is not to be sneezed at, I suppose: there is a vast, unworked area even yet, an area which most of the better-known Irish writers have failed or not cared to exploit. Edna O'Brien who comes from the rural Ireland of small farmers and shopkeepers and whose novels and short stories have brought her well-deserved acclaim, could have written a great book about the country folk of her native Co. Clare, the life they created for themselves in the booming London of the 1950's and '60's — the construction labourers and entrepreneurs that came from their ranks, the girls and women who staffed hospitals, the ordinary Irish folk of a later period caught up in the backwash of Northern Ireland turbulence, the innocently convicted — and the guilty. How is it that so few Irish writers have tried to tell what it was like to be earning your bread in England and to feel compelled — because of what English, or Britain if you will, was doing in Ireland — to 'bite the hand that fed you?' I mention Edna O'Brien only because she is a writer of wide renown and one whom I believe could have given us a memorable novel that would reflect ordinary working class Irish life in Britain whereas for the most part she writes of a *millieu* that most of us do not recognise or know. You may say that what a writer writes about is his or her own business and no doubt that is so — but one is at liberty to wonder why so many Irish writers have not chosen to give as complete a picture of Irish life in Britain as they have of Irish life at home in Ireland. After all there was a good quarter of the population of the Irish Republic here in Britain throughout the latter half of the 1950's. Must not the complexities and tension that arose out of our coming to the one country in the entire world that could be regarded as the old enemy provide the stuff of novels and drama? Irish people emigrating to the U.S.A. or to English speaking countries like New Zealand or Australia were spared the frictions — the very frictions to which they themselves contributed in, I would say, equal measure — that the Irish in Britain had to live with; the unresolved conflict of attitudes, the difficulties of reconciling acceptance, welcome and friendship on the one hand with suspicion, preconceived notions and condescension on the other. It might have been easier for the Irish if the English were uniformly hostile and suspicious — what was more difficult to confront was that there was goodwill in even greater measure and that where there was misconception and condescension (as in the English *penchant* for seeing the Irish as comical people) it was often the product of a kind of kinship. In short that English

people often felt they could poke fun at us precisely because they felt — what many Irish would deny — that, willy-nilly, we were an integral part of a centuries old partnership. One problem in a sense is that we have always been too well accepted (and that acceptance became greater as soon as ever the immigration from the West Indies and other parts of the Commonwealth got under way in the early 1960's); there was never any bar to complete integration — within one's own, the working class, that is — in the way that Blacks and Asians found themselves



barred. "I find it ironic," a West Indian carpenter whom I worked with said to me once "that you who are so keen to proclaim your non-Britishness are so fully accepted while I who am anxious to assert my Britishness am not accepted at all. *Your* children may retain as much Irish culture as ever they wish — music, dancing, games and even the Gaelic, as many of your children in the Irish community strive to do — but they will be still more accepted here than mine however English they may wish to become. Colour, friend, is the real bar!"

He might have added 'within one's own class' because class is a barrier too. A popular but very mistaken notion among the Irish who flooded into Britain in the immediate post war years was that there was no class distinction in England. The English would hardly subscribe to that idea but what the Irish who came here failed to take into consideration was that class is much more stratified in Britain and that people do not mix with those of other classes in large urban areas as, perforce they had to do in small Irish towns and villages. In Ireland you might find a labourer, a tradesman and a professional man drinking at the same bar but until pub lunches and snacks became the thing you didn't find it very often in urban Britain. Irish working class people had plenty of experience of snobbery at home in Ireland but it was the snobbery of tuppence ha'penny looking down on tuppence, or any god's number of people not being 'good enough' for each other — a snobbery they could recognise and grapple with (or not as the case might be). It was the sort of snobbery you get when the middle and professional classes are newly emerged from a largely peasant background, where memories are long and people are in a position to remind the uppity that it wasn't all that long since they hadn't much in the way of worldly goods or status — a kind of snobbery very far removed from the attitudes of the old rich who are so guiltily conscious of wealth and privilege that they find themselves embarrassed in the presence of the poor. What the Irish who came to Britain found was a lack of petty snobbery among the urban working class (or at least a lack of easily recognisable snobbery) and even a sense of liberation in the discovery that a good fat wage packet made the labouring man or the factory girl as good at least as the relatively poorly paid clerical worker who was so highly regarded back home. Indeed I have seen many instances of a new inverted snobbery during the boom years in Britain — when farmers' sons who would be ashamed to be seen shovelling stone or digging a trench in Ireland boasted of the big money they earned doing precisely that here in Britain.

Money was the great leveller then and it was recognised back home too: time and again I have been told by people from the labouring or cottager class in counties like Limerick and Tipperary that those same farmers and their families who had held aloof from them in their childhood days at home were happy to be associated with them when they returned for holidays showing all the signs of prosperity that came into being in the 'never had it so good days' of the Macmillan era.

The Irish in short — the working class Irish I mean — encountered very little true snobbery from the working class English among whom they had to come for a crust; they may have encountered in varying degrees, condescension, hostility, suspicion and even what is perhaps erroneously being called 'racism' today, but not snobbery as such, at least not in my opinion. Hence the mistaken notion that England was a snobbery-free society. They'd found plenty of it in a perhaps more gentle form than they had known at home if they had been able to venture into the more salubrious fringes of the towns and cities they had come to live in. No doubt those among us who did very well materially — in business for example — and who could afford substantial houses in the leafy suburbs came up against snobbery; and just how it affected them, and their response to it, is again the very stuff of that literature which should have reflected it.



The constraints which I found on coming to live in Britain were imposed from within and not from without the Irish community, and these same constraints, taboos and hang-ups have scarcely featured at all it seems to me in literature. Let me say at once that lacking the gumption and also the earthy cuteness which so many of us brought from rural Ireland I began to put my foot in it, as they say, with my own people almost from the moment I arrived. To be sure I had my share of preconceived notions about the English — though these were well-tempered by hearing it repeated *ad nauseum* by Irish people home from Britain that the English were the nicest people you could ask to meet or work with. (In fact I often thought how nice it would be if some of the English could only overhear such glowing tributes — for of course the Irish would never tell them to their face, that would be far too much like giving in to the old foe!) Like many more of my compatriots male and female I was rather prone to take offence where I thought that Irish national dignity was being attacked and I tended to resent — fairly enough you might agree — any illfounded criticism of Catholic practices. But for all that I was more open with the English than most of my fellow Irish were prepared to be and when I once made the, to me perfectly, sensible, admission that there was little employment in Ireland I was quickly told by those who worked with me that I was letting down the side. That was in my first job here as a ward orderly in a large hospital staffed mainly by Irish and Displaced Persons from countries like Poland, the Ukraine and the Baltic States, and very soon I learned to curb my tongue rather than invite the censure of the Irish. On another occasion I put myself in bad odour by commenting on a row in an Irish dancehall

which I had witnessed the night before; it was in the refectory, and there were some English nurses and orderlies present, and I was later accused of pandering to their prejudiced notions of the Irish as drunken brawlers. I should have kept quiet about the damned row and not been giving them ammunition! They may have had a point of course, my touchy compatriots, but I think that they erred on the side of caution and that in an odd way they cared much more about what the English thought of us than I did ... But I learned, and conformed and in writing my first book I drew attention to this touchiness although by then I think I had begun to endorse it myself.



A little later, working in the building industry and particularly on the kind of civil engineering projects where there were so many Irishmen employed I learned that the menfolk were hardly less guarded than the women. There were a quite extraordinary number of taboos, of things that 'a right man' (that was the phrase) didn't do or say. You could let yourself down by doing the most innocuous of things — as for example eating fish and chips out of a bag in public. That was taken as a sure sign that you hadn't been used to much at home — as indeed was a partiality for such wholesome items of foodstuff as lettuce or beans! I once wrote an article for the *Irish Times* called *The Navvy as a Food Snob* and in it I recounted how the rough and ready labourers on the back of a Murphy's lorry would hoot in derision at the queues outside the fish and chip shops as they passed on their way home from work in the evening; those mud-spattered Irish navvies despised the fish and chip eating English and attributed their poor eating habits to their inability to perform hard work like digging or

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concreting. (That itself was a fallacy, of course, comparable to many English fallacies about the Irish: some of the best workers I have ever know were Englishmen ...)

"I'm Pincher Brown from Camden Town, I like my eggs and bacon.

If you think I'll eat your fish and chips you're bloody well mistaken!"

That was the response of Pincher (Timberman, that is) Brown to his English landlady when she put 'a piece and six penn'orth up for his dinner in the days when you could get fish and chips for that much, and it used to be repeated with great relish by Irishmen in digs and on building sites. The rural Irish were by and large pretty ignorant of the value of greens and other vegetables and tended to despise them, like fish, as the diet of people who had never been used to good feeding. I remember one summer's evening tucking in happily to a salad dinner in the digs — spring onions, lettuce, raddish with some ham and potatoes — until I became aware of two Co. Longford brothers regarding me with a mixture of pity and horror. They ate their ham and spuds and then went angrily off to the cafe for a proper feed of steak and onions. Such attitudes are long a thing of the past, to be sure, and the town Irish never entertained them to the same extent in any case; I suppose it was as such a matter of the countryman's contempt for the ill-fed townie as the Irishman's for the English; but whatever it was it wasn't easy to live with.

It occurs to me that I may well be disappointing some listeners by harping on peripheral and trivial things, things observed within a necessarily limited ambit — but others no doubt will be talking about the hard bones of the subject, those aspects of it which can be supported by facts and figures, studies of population movements of whatever. There is no shortage of sources and material and so I may be forgiven, perhaps for my concentration on the more subjective side of things. This is the role of the creative writer I suppose but as I've already said our Irish creative writers have had little to say about the social attitudes of the Irish in Britain.



I think it may be safely said that there is and has long been a fundamental defect somewhere in our national consciousness as a people, a sort of confusion of mind which we have never resolved. Let me get at what I want to say by using as an example the generation of emigrants from Ireland that came here just after World War Two and for the decade or so that followed. Many of us were aggressively nationalistic but in a peculiarly muddled way; contradictorily a lot of the Irish who came here in those days tended to resent the label of foreigner though you might think that the logic of their assertiveness of being separate and independent from Britain must mean they were indeed foreign. 'Foreigner' was a term of some denigration popularly in those days just as 'immigrant' is today; there were a great many foreigners — D.P.'s they were also called, displaced persons, many of whom perforce or otherwise had fought on the side of Germany in the Second World War. On the whole the British tended to despise

these — Poles were particularly unpopular in the building industry because they were believed to work for less and be willing to suffer worse working conditions than the native population. "Jam Holl" was the common term for Pole and the hostility towards them sprang as much from British insularity I imagine as from any suspicion about their role in the war. Poles who were known to have fought for Britain were hardly more acceptable. But interestingly enough the Irish quickly latched on to these attitudes: I knew one Irish contractor who made a point of paying Polish — that is to say east European because they all more or less went under the generic name of Pole — employees less than he paid his own compatriots. That man is a household name in Britain today but I know for a fact that he told one of his foremen to 'Keep those bastards down.' There



All but the more politically aware of the Irish I knew resented being called foreigners and they did not thank you when you pointed out to them that since they came from an independent republic (not economically independent to be sure, but no matter) they must surely be foreign — they could hardly hope to have it both ways. But they seemed to want that and in spite of their very often chip-on-the-shoulder nationalism and their protestations of being Irish and proud of it — something you rarely hear today, not in that negative sense — it seems to me that subconsciously at least they subscribed to the notion of their host community that, independence notwithstanding, the Irish were a member of the four family British nation. In passing let me comment on something: in those days British people often reminded you, in the course of an argument, that you were British whether you liked it or not; today very few people regard the Irish of the Twenty Six Counties as British and certainly not the Nationalists of the Six Counties.

Part of our confusion it seems to me derived from the fact that we never had much affection for, or loyalty to, the Twenty Six County State; Ireland yes, our own portion of it particularly, the notion of being Irish and proud of it — but no discernible affection for the state that had come about through the Anglo-Irish war, no awareness of it as a political entity nor great respect for its figurehead president, certainly not in the way that Americans respect the office in their country. We seemed to me to be wanting to have our cake and eat it, to be better accepted by the British than any other immigrant group while at the same time making it clear that we were different, and being very slow to forget the wrongs done us in the past. A big element of our national consciousness in any case was a rather negative thing — it was anti-British rather than being truly pro-Irish. True patriotism of the kind that could maybe make a success of independence was somewhat in short measure; much of what passed for patriotism was spurious, public house sentimentality ... I'll always remember the scene in an Irish dancehall in the late Fifties, everyone out on the floor waltzing to the air of *Séan South from Garryowen* — Séan South who was killed while making an armed attack

AN IRISH IDENTITY

The Poetry of Louis Macneice



Poetry lovers from all over the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland gathered at Liverpool University on Saturday, 3 September, at a conference on the life and work of the poet, playwright and BBC Radio Producer Louis MacNeice on the 25th anniversary of his death. The conference was hosted by the **Institute of Irish Studies** and the guests of honour were Hedli and Corrina MacNeice, the poet's widow and daughter.

In the morning, Jon Stallworthy (Wolfson College, Oxford), MacNeice's official biographer, gave a masterly demonstration of the literary biographer's art, relating childhood experiences to the development of the man and poet and tracking down the inter-relationships between life and text and between texts. The afternoon sessions concentrated upon the relationship between MacNeice and Ireland. Terence Brown (Trinity College, Dublin) proposed that MacNeice's treatment of Ireland in his work should be set in the context of his journeys and in particular of islands — the Hebrides and Iceland as well as Ireland. Dr. Peter McDonald (Christ Church, Oxford) showed MacNeice's critical but sympathetic depiction of Ireland. Later in the afternoon Edna Longley (Queen's University, Belfast) and Tom Paulin (Nottingham) convincingly argued that MacNeice had a prominent position in 20th century Irish literature and that his influence was greatest upon the Ulster poets who have emerged since MacNeice's death.

All of the speakers disagreed strongly with the claim of Professor Denis Donoghue that MacNeice was not Irish and did not concern himself with Ireland. On the contrary, they maintained that MacNeice's early years in Belfast and Carrickfergus ensured that he had an Irish sensitivity and an Irish voice in his work which was not submerged by his education in England at prep school, public school and university, nor by his work in England. Moreover, all the speakers underlined the distinctiveness of MacNeice's work, the appreciation of which has been stunted by his connection with others. He was different from his 'Trustees' contemporaries — Auden, Day Lewis and Spender — and, according to Dr. Longley, MacNeice did more than other twentieth century poets to 'test poetry against the century ... against the claims of politics and philosophy, against the pressures of cities and war', refusing to take the outcome of these tests, or anything else, for granted.

The conference was a great success both in its own right, assisted by the large attendance from Britain and Ireland, including a BBC team making a programme on MacNeice; and through its consolidation of the Liverpool Institute as the major centre in Great Britain for Irish Studies.

The **Institute of Irish Studies** was established at Liverpool University in 1988 as the first multi-disciplinary teaching and research centre of its kind in Great Britain. It fosters the academic study of Ireland and aspects of Britain which have a bearing on Ireland, promotes the educational and cultural aspirations of the Irish community in Britain, and generally provides information on, and analysis of, Irish and Anglo-Irish affairs. It aims to make the study of Ireland an integral part of the educational system in Great Britain.

It is developing a schools programme in conjunction with the British Association for Irish Studies and offers an Irish Studies pathway, equivalent to half a degree, in the BA in Combined Honours. At postgraduate level there is a part-time, two-year MA in Irish Studies, a taught course encouraging the advanced scholarly study of Ireland and providing a springboard for later research. There are also ample opportunities for undertaking research, both full and part-time, into the many aspects of Ireland and Anglo-Irish relations covered by the research programme.

The research programme is the basis of the Institute's work. Some twenty members of staff in Liverpool University and neighbouring institutions of higher education have research interests in five broad areas: *Celtic Art* from its inception to the present day; *Modern Irish Literature and Drama*, emphasising the inter-play between literature and politics; *Anglo-Irish Relations* from the conquest of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the common political and environmental problems of Ireland and the United Kingdom today; *Northern Ireland*, including the impact of sport and leisure on community relations, unionist politics and the operation of devolved government and the legal system; and the *Irish in Britain* from the late eighteenth century, focusing on questions of adjustment and alienation.

For further details contact Brian Thompson, Deputy Director on 051 709 6022, Ext. 2809 or 2382.

PROGRESS AND PERCEPTIONS: THE POSITION AND STATUS OF IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN IN 1989

The 1989 Soar Valley Conference

Nessan Danaher

The aim of this year's conference was to chart positive developments in Irish studies and to assess what areas still need work doing in. The first guest speaker was Mary Hickman of the Irish Studies Centre at North London Polytechnic who delivered a most effective and analytical summary of developments in Irish studies in the last decade. Ms Hickman reminded the conference that the initial impetus for current development was rooted in three areas: community pressure; adult and community education initiatives and the need for an Irish perspective on multicultural and anti-racist education. The formation of the BAIS was crucial as was its constitution which gave equal prominence to higher, adult and compulsory education. Ms Hickman then moved on to the importance of the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University and the Irish Studies Centre at NLP. Links were being forged between the two institutions, which are so crucial to the future development of Irish studies. The lecture was a splendid overview of the developments in Britain during the last decade and it was warmly received.

The contribution of Mary Hickman was most ably complimented by the second lecture, given by *ISIB* editor Jonathan Moore, who put an analytical spotlight on the still topical issue of 'Historical revisionism and the Irish in Britain'. He argued that the question encompassed areas of great sensitivity, such as the political, cultural, psychological and personal. Can any revisionist history be completely objective; surely revisionism implies a counter subjectivity to balance a previous subjectivity? As Mr Moore pointed out, the second generation Irish have needs and entitlements other than the purely academic. Just as the revisionist historians are rebelling against nationalism in southern Ireland, so the Irish in Britain are rebelling against anti-Irish racism. The problem for the Irish in Britain is that the vast majority of historical texts currently available today are from an anti-Nationalist perspective. There is thus a need for a new Nationalist historiography. The lecture was very well received and there was

a lively discussion following it.

There was, as usual, a varied choice of workshops.

David Smith (Leicester Polytechnic) — Sources for studying the Travellers, past and present.

Catherine Byron (Irish Studies Workshop, Leicester) — Teaching modern Irish Poetry by Women Writers.

John McGurk: using source materials for teaching 16th and 17th Century Irish Studies and Anglo-Irish relations; (Liverpool Irish Studies Institute)

Paul Stewart (Sunderland Poly.) and **Jim McCauley** (N. Staffs Poly.) on Protestant identity in N. Ireland — examination of the issues.

Jo Flynn (Manchester LEA) the new Adult Ed. GCSE in Irish Studies in the Manchester Open College context.

Sean Hutton (BAIS Executive Director): Sources for Irish Working Class History.

Kate Thompson — Irish Language Teaching for Adults, new methodologies, materials and resources.

Pat Buckland/Roger Swift Irish Studies in the Secondary School with special reference to the new A Level and A/S Levels.

Phil Slight & Team — Ethnographic Resources for Art Education, B'Ham Poly. — Celtic Art & Design in schools (Jun. & Sec.)

The whole range of workshops proved to have great appeal. Once again, our thanks to Four Provinces Bookshop for mounting a very wide display of items for sale, and to College staff for support (in particular Ms Jo McGuigan and Ms Wendy Burke for help with our exhibition and producing the Annual Report). Crucial financial support came mainly from BAIS, and also from Leicester City Council, the Leicester LEA Multicultural Service and from Valley College.

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IRISH STUDIES MAKES THE 'A' GRADE

Sixth formers and college students in England and Wales will now be able to study Ireland at 'A' level and 'A/S' level for the first time.

The Schools Examination and Assessment Council has approved (**Monday 13 February**) a package of three syllabuses in Irish Studies submitted by the Joint Matriculation Board. The package is part of the Joint Education Programme which is being developed by the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool and the British Association for Irish Studies, and which is being sponsored in part by Allied Irish Bank.

The package is based upon the latest JMB thinking on history in the sixth-form and consists of two Advanced Supplementary syllabuses and an Advanced Level syllabus. The two A/S syllabuses are 'The Irish in Great Britain, 1815-1914' and 'History, Literature and the Irish Identity, 1890-1926'. The A-level syllabus, 'Modern Irish History', is achieved by a combination of the two A/S syllabuses taken at the same sitting. It thus provides a flexible, multi-cultural framework for the study of Irish history and the broadening of the sixth-form curriculum by making most effective use of resources and enabling both A-level and A/S level students to be taught together.

Dr. Patrick Buckland, Director of the Institute of Irish Studies said, "We welcome the acceptance of the new syllabus which will, at last, put the study of Ireland on a firm footing within the six-form curriculum, and at the same time act as a useful framework for further A and A/S developments".

The package explores in different ways notions of Ireland and Irishness and the relationship of Ireland and Irish people to the rest of the United Kingdom. 'The Irish in Great Britain' provides an historical perspective on the position of immigrants and minorities within an increasingly multi-cultural society by asking why the Irish emigrated to England, Scotland and Wales and how far they preserved a distinctive identity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'History, Literature and the Irish Identity' highlights issues of national writers during a formative period in modern Irish history.

The syllabuses draw upon a wide range of sources and concepts to provide a broad educational experience and underline how the study of past embraces all aspects of human endeavour. They also reflect the determination of the Institute and the Association not only to raise the status and profile of Irish Studies in schools, but also to use the study of Ireland to address broader issues of general academic interest and contemporary concern.

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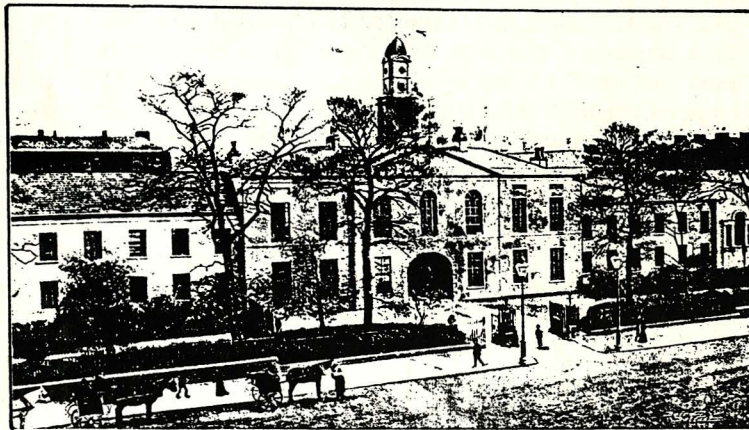
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GUINNESS. PURE GENIUS.

LETTER FROM THE NORTH

John Gray, Linen Hall Library



OLD WHITE LINEN HALL,
on site now occupied by Belfast City Hall.

All news from the North on the fortunes of cultural institutions does pale into insignificance beside the recent enormous contribution of £150,000 made by the Allied Irish Bank to the British Association of Irish Studies.

In one sense the indigenous Irish may view the development with some trepidation! Increased and long overdue provision for Irish studies on the mainland implies increased demand, and especially academic demand, for access to resources in Ireland. Can we meet it?

Fortunately in the North we can report something of a spring climate in the field of provision. Here at the Linen Hall Library the Department of Education has increased grant aid for 1988/89 to £79,000 from a previous figure of £38,000. For the first time grant aid is to be specifically related to 50% support for Irish and local studies work and for computerisation which is due to commence later this year with on line link up to Queen's University library.

At last then grant aid at the Linen Hall will adequately underpin the basic operations of the Library. In the meantime the library's ambitious Bicentennial Development Campaign launched last year has already raised almost £100,000 of its £300,000 target and this can now be put to positive use. Extended seating area, proper strong room accommodation, fire safety systems, a conservation programme, and increased book purchases are all on the agenda.

Perhaps the Development Campaign objective of greatest significance for those across the water is provision of additional support for the computerisation programme. The Linen Hall is always willing to lend books via inter library loan but without access to adequate catalogues this is a facility of little more than notional value elsewhere. Nor is it sufficient with a great historic collection merely to proceed with computerisation of new acquisitions. The real value, and the real cost in time and money lies in retrospective conversion. At the moment it is merely a dream that the user of a computer terminal in Bradford could determine at the press of a few keys the entire Linen Hall holdings on, say, Presbyterianism in Ballymena, and then proceed to request loan. It is a dream we intend to turn into a reality, preferably within 5 years but with an outstanding price tag of £40,000.

In one other area crucial progress has already been made. The library's definitive collection of 35,000 items relating to the current troubles is now being made fully

accessible with publication on microfiche of runs of more than 500 periodical titles as **Northern Ireland Political Literature** 'Phase 1 Periodicals 1968-1985' comprising some 1,900 fiche. Provided with this is a detailed catalogue of holdings with indexes by publisher, place of publication and date of publication. Publication on this scale is alas not cheap, Phase 1 Periodicals 1968-1985 costs £5,000. Sales will, however, help sustain existing work in this uniquely important field of collection and bibliographic record. To do what we actually require to do in this vastly expanding area we are also seeking to raise

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an additional £40,000 through our Development Campaign.

Much to do then, but a relatively optimistic picture. Happily this is also more broadly the case with the watershed decision to increase Northern Ireland Arts Council funding to mainland per capita levels, and additional support in train for Ulster museums. Even Belfast City Council, often in the past 'pilloried' for its lack of arts support (though always a good friend of the Linen Hall) is now anxious to emphasise its arts support.

Why the new climate? No doubt a genuine recognition of how far the arts in Ulster have been underfunded. Certainly a parallel argument with that on the mainland that the arts make a cost effective contribution to the economy. There is in Northern Ireland the additional dimension of the arts seen a social cement in a fractured society. Whereas in the 1970s this hope was forlornly

pinned on a plethora of leisure facilities, the arts now seem to be seen as a better bet.

Dangerous territory this. For all that the Linen Hall serves all sections of the community with unique effect we, by principle, collect the rough story as well as the bland one. Nor can we presume to determine what use our readers from all walks of life may make of our resources, any more than the British Museum Library could prevent the gestation of *Das Kapital* in its reading room. What we can say is that all readers have a right to exhaustive access to the literature of their own community in particular.

Anyone interested or able to assist in any aspect of our endeavours should ring or write to John Gray, Librarian, Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast BT1 5GD. Tel: (0232) 321707.

LETTER

10 Athol St.
Belfast.
BT12 49X.

Dear Sir,

In his interesting article on 'Irish Nationalism versus British Labour' (*ISIB* 13) J. Dunleavy leaves out of account a number of matters which have had a major influence not only on the development of the Labour Party's attitudes and values towards Ireland, but also on how the Irish Labour politics have developed in the 20th Century.

Most important of these matters is the fact that in its formative years, the Labour Party was organised among the working-class of what became Northern Ireland. The first annual Conference of the Labour Party was held in Belfast in 1907. Belfast men like William Walker and J.J. Stephenson were members of the Labour Party's Executive Committee, in pre-war years.

The Labour Party's decision in 1918 to withdraw from what became Northern Ireland dealt a crushing blow to the prospects of developing a powerful and self-confident working class there. The Labour Party abandoned the workers of Belfast to their fate at the hands of Unionism.

It is as well to realise, when studying Irish Labour history, that at the very moment when the trade union movement was transforming itself into a political force capable of governing the society, the workers of Belfast were frozen out, to be trapped into a sectarian politics from which they have yet to escape. The extent to which this was caused by Irish nationalist influence within the British Labour movement is something which requires further study, but the consequences are unmistakable.

Yours faithfully,

David Young.

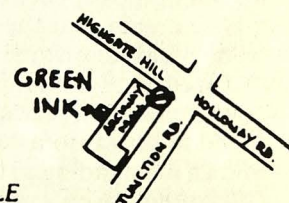
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MONEY FOR IRISH STUDIES!

Jim O'Hara

British Association for Irish Studies

As anyone engaged in education in this country will know, the difficulties of securing adequate funding for even the most modest innovation are becoming more and more acute. For this reason, the British Association for Irish Studies (B.A.I.S.), which is now in its third year of existence, was glad to receive initial funding from both the Irish and British Governments, but was also determined not to become reliant upon such financial support. We used some of this money to embark upon a major long-term fund raising operation which will hopefully make the association self-sufficient, and also enable it to finance the many projects we have steadily amassed in the pipe line.

In February 1989, we were able to announce a major breakthrough, when Allied Irish Bank, one of Ireland's premier financial institutions and one which does a substantial proportion of its business in Britain, agreed to fund the development plant of the B.A.I.S. to the sum of £150,000. This major act of corporate sponsorship clearly marks a significant advance in the promotion of Irish Studies in Britain. The money is being used for two specific purposes, viz. to finance the post of Executive Director of the B.A.I.S. and also to appoint a Director of Joint Education which we are developing in conjunction with the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University.

The announcement of the sponsorship was made a reception hosted by Mr. Andrew O'Rourke, the Irish Ambassador in Britain, at the Irish Embassy. On behalf of Allied Irish Bank, Mr. Brian Wilson, Group General Manager — Britain, said: "We in Allied Irish Bank are interested in significant initiations which seek to improve mutual understanding and co-operation between our two countries. We are impressed by the nature of B.A.I.S., the clarity of its aims and the progress it has made to date in promoting Irish Studies in Britain." The association is obviously very pleased to have secured this commitment from Allied Irish Bank, but nevertheless is very aware that this is only one step on a long road. We hope now that other Irish companies and indeed wealthy individuals will share the same foresight and follow the A.I.B. lead. Whereas German, French and Canadian Studies get generous support from commercial interests as well as funding from their own governments, Irish firms have rarely come forward to support educational initiatives, especially outside Ireland. This has been partly due to the lack of a nationally organised Irish Studies movement operating at all levels of the British educational system; now that this gap has been filled, we hope that Irish business organisations will recognise the worth of the cause. It is only as a result of such support that the numerous major Irish Studies schemes will even get off the ground. Teachers, academic, educationalists can draw up the schemes, and the pupils and students are certainly there, but someone has to provide the finance.

The Joint Education Programmes has quickly produced the first fruits. It is aimed at raising the scope and status of

Irish Studies in schools and in community education. The programme is controlled by a Steering Group with representatives from all sectors of education, examining bodies and the Irish community, with the support of the Inspectorate. Very recently an A Level in Irish History and two A/AS Levels in Irish History and Literature have been developed and accepted by the Joint Matriculation Board, and these should become operative from September this year. Work on a G.C.S.E. in the Irish language is well under way, and a similar project for a G.C.S.E. in Irish Studies is in hand. In the next few weeks, we shall be holding interviews to appoint a full-time Director of the Joint Education Programme for an initial three year period.

In March this year, the association in co-operation with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, organised two history conferences at Magee College, Derry. The subject was the A Level History Examination Paper, Ireland c. 1912-c.1923, and the speakers included academics from Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and Great Britain. On each day, over one hundred pupils attended, coming from both Protestant and Catholic schools and it was a pleasure to be present at such lively and informed discussion and debate. We hope to run a similar exercise next year, and were delighted at the positive response from both pupils and staff.

The initiatives on the Irish language front are proceeding well, with students recently taking the examinations organised in conjunction with the Institute of Linguists; even more recently we have arranged with Gael Linn to finance two scholarships to send students to Ireland this summer to develop their study of the language. In addition to our sub-committees on education and language, we decided at our A.G.M. to set up a fifth sub-committee dealing with cultural activities; while this is still in its infancy, we hope to organise two or three major cultural events over the next year, and are discussing the possibility of an exhibition of Irish art in the more distant future.

These activities reflect the growing awareness of, and interest in, Irish Studies which is taking place in Britain, and not just amongst the Irish or second generation Irish here; many of those following Irish Studies courses have no Irish background. Much of what has been achieved in the last three years has been due to the earlier pioneering efforts of a number of Irish studies activists who took up the cause when the educational and political climate was not favourable. The present possibilities are genuinely exciting ones, and with adequate support, Irish Studies in this country can make huge advances over the next few years.

Further information on the British Association for Irish Studies can be obtained from Sean Hutton, Executive Director, 9 Poland Street, London, W.1.

CAOLAIGEANTACHT

Seoirse Ó Broin

Tá cuid mhór daoine in aghaidh na Gaelige agus ag ceistiú cén mhaithas atá i dteanga nach labhrann an gnáthdhuine in Éirinn ach corr-uair. Deir siad nár chuidigh sí leo obair a fháil agus nach bhfuil sí teicniúil go leor sa lá inniu. Bhail, tá aithne agam ar lear daoine a bhfuil creideamh acu agus ní bhfaigheann siad pá ar bith as. Is dócha gur chuala lucht eaglaise na focail ar an chéad Domhnach den Chargas nach ar arán amháin a mhaireann an duine. Bíonn riachtanais ag anam an duine chomh maith leis an chorp.

Sé sin an difear idir traenáil agus oideachas. Sa churaclam nua atá á mholadh do na scoileanna tá béim ar thraenáil, ar iomaíocht, ar mhargáil agus ar bharr a bhreith ar an duine eile. Níl an tábhacht chéanna ag dul do mhaireachtáil, chomhoibriú le chéile, áilleacht, chruthaíocht nó na mothúcair féin. Tá dearcadh an rialtais cúng gearr-radharcach. Tá béim ró-mhór ar anmhargadh in áit na pearsan.

B'fhéidir go bhfuil an dearcadh sin maith go leor fá choinne Sasana ach ní chabhraíonn se le tuaisceart na hÉireann. De réir reachtaíocht an Chomhaontaithe Angla-Éireannaigh bheadh aitheantas a thabhairt don dá thraidisiún sna sé chontae. Go dtí seo gealltanas folamh atá sa reachtaíocht sin.

Feiceann gach duine an díspeagadh atá a dhéanamh ar theanga na Gaelige. Tá an t-aire oideachais sa Tuaisceart ag iarraidh an Ghaeilge a ruaigeadh as na scoileanna. De réir daonlathais agus mian na dtuismitheoirí tá éileamh anamhór ar scoileanna agus naíonraí Gaelige. Ní féidir leo coinneáil suas leis an éileamh sin. Ní bhfaigheann ach bunscoil amháin airgead ar bith ón rialtas. Molaim go mór na hiarrachtaí a bhíonn á ndéanamh ag na daoine i gceantair ina bhfuil dífhostaíocht agus easnamh. Ba cheart tacaíocht a thabairt dóibh, mar níl siad ag fáil cothrom na Féinne ón rialtas. Léiríonn sé an chaolaigheantacht atá i réim go fóill ag údaraid an Tuaiscirt.

Thug mé cuairt ar an chéad bhunscoil lán- Gaelige i mBéal Feirste. Tá sé dearfa go bhfuil caighdeán ard oideachais le fáil ann agus na muinteoirí uilig díoghrasach fuithi. Chonaic mé na páistí gealgháireacha beoga ag baint taithnimh aisti. Agus is iontach an íobairt a rinne muintir na háite leis an áit a thógáil agus an sprid atá acu a feabhsú. Tá na scoileanna Gaeilge oscailte do gach chreideamh agus aicme. Níl an Ghaeilge in a monaplacht do dhream amháin polaitíochta. Le tuilleadh eolais a fháil ar staid na Gaeilge i dTuaisceart na hÉireann scríobh chuig Glór na nGael, 211A Bóthar na bhFal, Béal Feirste BT12 6SB.

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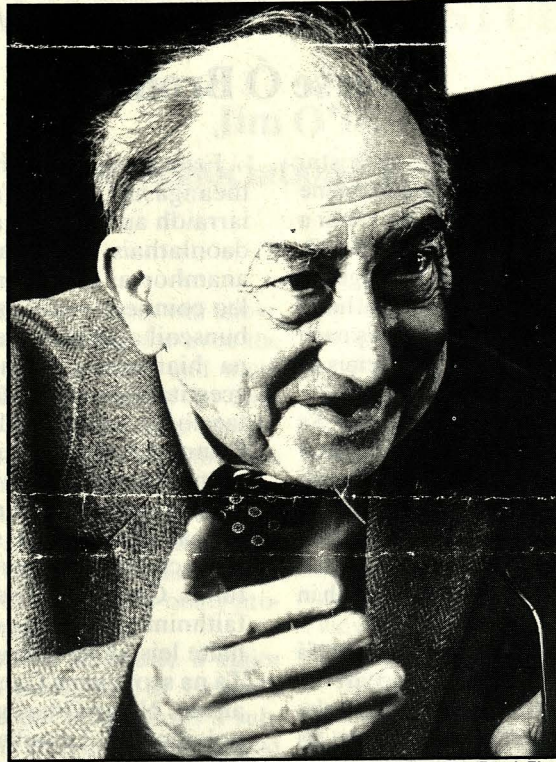
Thomas Moore, author of *The Minstrel Boy*, *The Last Rose of Summer* etc., is a name without association in present day Ireland. The songs are familiar but the man is unknown. One expects to find him a pious inoffensive nonentity, but the truth is surprising. Moore was the first Catholic admitted to Trinity College, was a close friend of Robert Emmett, a contributor to the United Irish newspaper, a notorious writer of erotic verse, a friend and biographer of Byron.

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OBITUARY



Pic: Derek Piers

C. DESMOND GREAVES

Born September 27th 1913

orn in Birkenhead of Irish Protestant background, Desmond Greaves studied science at Liverpool University, where he involved himself in the anti-fascist and socialist movements of the 1930s, joining the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1937, which he remained in until his death.

During and after the war, he worked at Woolwich Arsenal, the British Coal Utilisation Board and Powell Duffryn. He was a chief research chemist and had several scientific patents to his name.

He joined the Connolly Association in 1940, two years after its foundation, giving up lucrative private employment to take on the editorship of the Irish Democrat in January 1948 which he continued for 40 years.

During that time, he devoted his political full-time to the cause of a united independent Ireland by means of the organisation of the Irish community in Britain and winning the labour and trade union movement to a policy against partition.

His biographies of James Connolly, Liam Mellows, Sean O'Casey and Wolfe Tone are classics of radical history-writing and political thought.

He passed on to new generations the socialist republicanism of James Connolly, which he himself had received from the greatest English historian of Ireland, T.A. Jackson.

As an internationalist, Desmond Greaves championed the right to independence of all nations, and in particular the Irish, as the only basis for free and non-exploitative relations between peoples. He opposed the Common Market from its inception as a destroyer of national democracy and a political front for West European transnational capital.

Intellectual of genius, political organiser, poet, fighter for good causes, exposé of cant and humbug wherever he

Died August 23rd, 1988

met it, sociable companion and genial conversationalist, champion of community and neighbourliness as the basis for a civilised society, a strong advocate of women's rights in public life — we shall not look on the likes of Desmond Greaves again.

A musicologist, a linguist, a keen student of the Celtic languages, botanist, until recent years a keen cyclist, Desmond's lively and enquiring mind ranged over a whole multitude of subjects.

In the weeks before his death Desmond spoke at meetings in London, Blackburn and Glasgow. He died suddenly of a heart attack on the train at Preston while preparing for the Connolly Association's Jubilee Conference.

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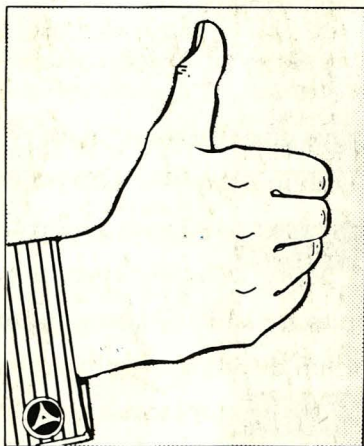
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